

REMARKS

Claims 1-9 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, claim 1 is amended. No new matter is added. Reconsideration of the application is respectfully requested.

Entry of the amendments is proper under 37 CFR §1.116 since the amendments: (a) place the application in condition for allowance for the reasons discussed herein; (b) do not raise any new issue requiring further search and/or consideration as the amendment is to provide proper antecedent basis; and (c) place the application in better form for appeal, should an appeal be necessary. Entry of the amendments is thus respectfully requested.

Applicants appreciate the courtesies shown to Applicants' representatives by Examiner Poon in the February 3, 2006 personal interview. Applicants' separate record of the substance of the interview is incorporated into the following remarks.

Claim 1 is amended by this Amendment to provide proper antecedent basis. The amendment corrects a translation error to make the claims consistent with the claims of the Japanese priority document, and thus does not raise any new issues or narrow the claims. Thus, the patentability of claim 1 is not changed by this Amendment.

The Office Action rejects claims 1, 2, 6, 8 and 9 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) over U.S. Patent No. 5,872,869 to Shimizu et al. (Shimizu). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claim 1 recites a distribution-type optical signal transmission medium to which the image signal input unit, the first optical signal output unit, the second optical signal output unit, and the optical signal input unit are connected, and which distributes an optical signal outputted from at least the first optical signal output unit to the image signal input unit and the optical signal input unit, and transmits an optical signal outputted from the second optical signal output unit to the image signal input unit. This feature is shown in Fig. 4, for example.

The Office Action alleges that optical fiber cables that connect an image generation unit 1, a reader 500 and a printer 600, which the Office Action alleges to correspond to the

recited second function unit, first function unit and image output unit, respectively, correspond to these features. During the personal interview, the Examiner clarified that the reader 500 of the first system 1 allegedly corresponds to the recited image output unit; the printer 600 of the second system 1 allegedly corresponds to the recited first function unit; the third system 1 allegedly corresponds to the second functional unit; and the fourth system 1 allegedly corresponds to the recited distribution-type optical signal transmission medium. Applicants respectfully assert that the Examiner is interpreting Shimizu too broadly because each device within a system 1 of Shimizu has a specific function (e.g., the reader 500 for reading data, and the printer 600 for outputting data), and thus a single system 1 is "multifunctional." Thus, only devices within a single "multifunctional" system 1 should be considered.

In addition, during the personal interview, in response to Applicants' representatives' arguments that the reader 500 of the first system 1 and the printer 600 of the second system 1 would not receive an optical signal by themselves, the Examiner shifted the interpretation that the first system 1 allegedly corresponds to the image output unit, and the second system 1 allegedly corresponds to the first functional unit.

Applicants respectfully submit that such an interpretation would introduce new grounds of rejection. Therefore, Applicants respectfully request a new Office Action should this new interpretation be relied upon for rejection.

However, even this new interpretation fails to meet all of the features recited in independent claim 1. Shimizu does not teach or suggest that, to transmit an output signal from the reader 500 of the first system 1 to the printer 600 of the second system 1, the output signal must be transmitted through the third system 1 and the fourth system 1. Claim 1 recites a specific way of transmitting input and output optical signals. All Shimizu teaches is, as described at col. 17, line 63-col. 18, line 9, that a signal can be transmitted from the reader

500 to the printer 600 via an optical fiber network 700. Therefore, the Examiner's allegation of transmitting data through the third system 1 and the fourth system 1 is not based on specific teachings of Shimizu, but must rely on impermissible hindsight knowledge gained from Applicants' specification.

Further, Shimizu does not specifically teach or suggest a distribution-type optical signal transmission medium. As discussed during the interview, the distribution-type optical signal transmission medium distributes an input optical signal to plural locations and comprises a medium having high light transmissivity, such as sheet PMMA (polymethyl methacrylate). See page 7, lines 13-21 of the specification, for example. In this way, the system can be easily expanded by connecting functional units to be added to the distribution-type optical transmission medium (see page 8, lines 8-10). Applicants respectfully submit that, as discussed during the personal interview, the fourth system 1 is not a medium, but rather it is a system that receives signals to perform functions and outputs signals based on those features. A system as taught by Shimizu cannot reasonably be considered to be an optical transmission medium as suggested by the Examiner. A person of ordinary skill in the art would recognize an optical transmission medium as a term of art as described in Applicants' specification, and would not disregard its meaning as required for the Examiner's position.

Moreover, Shimizu does not specifically teach or suggest that the fourth system 1 distributes an optical signal outputted from a first optical signal output unit of the second system 1 to an image signal input unit of the first system 1 and the optical signal input unit of the third system 1, and transmits an optical signal outputted from the second optical signal output unit of the third system 1 to the image signal input unit of the first system 1, as recited in claim 1. Accordingly, Shimizu does not teach or suggest a distribution-type optical signal transmission medium, as recited in claim 1.

At least for these reasons, claim 1 is patentable over Shimizu.

Claims 2, 6, 8 and 9 are patentable at least for their dependence on claim 1, as well as for the additional features they recite.

As such, at least for the reasons discussed above, Applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the rejection.

The Office Action rejects claims 4, 5 and 7 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Shimizu in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,822,475 to Hirota et al. (Hirota). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Hirota does not overcome the deficiencies of Shimizu with respect to claim 1. Therefore, the asserted combination of Shimizu and Hirota does not teach each and every feature of claims 4, 5 and 7. Thus, claims 4, 5 and 7 are patentable at least for their dependence on claim 1, as well as for the additional features they recite. Accordingly, withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

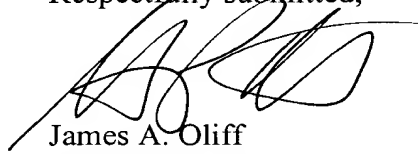
The Office Action rejects claim 3 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Shimizu in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,295,148 to Atlas. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Atlas does not overcome the deficiencies of Shimizu with respect to claim 1. Therefore, the asserted combination of Shimizu and Atlas does not teach each and every feature of claim 3. Thus, claim 3 is patentable at least for its dependence on claim 1, as well as for the additional features it recites. Accordingly, withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of claims 1-9 are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



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